

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4453
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
HQ USSOUTHCOM SCJ-2

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 3079

SANTIAGO FOR ASST SECRETARY TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINTS, SHUM, UY
SUBJ: CALL ON PRESIDENT MENDEZ

REF: MONTEVIDEO 3059 (DTG 100244Z AUG 77)

1. FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS, PRESIDENT
MENDEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER ROVIRA ESCORED ME TO AN AD-
JACENT OFFICE FOR A PRIVATE DISCUSSION.

2. MENDEZ DID ALL OF THE TALKING. AFTER THE USUAL
COURTESIES HE NOTED THAT THE CURRENT ESTRANGED RELATION-
SHIP WAS AN ABNORMALITY. "WE URUGUAYANS TAKE FOR GRANTED
CLOSE, CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES," HE REMARKED,
"I HOPE OUR DIFFERENCES ARE OVERCOME SHORTLY." HE ADDED
THAT HE WAS 73 YEARS OD AND MIGHT NOT BE IN OFFICE LONG
ENOUGH TO WITNESS THE IMPROVEMENT. HE THEN TALKED OF HOW
THE TUPAMARO THREAT SUPERIMPOSED ON A CORRUPT AND IN-
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EFFICIENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE SO TRAUMATIZED
THE SOCIETY THAT THE MILITARY INTERVENED TO REESTABLISH
ORDER. HE SAW AN INTERNATIONALLY-ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN OF
CALUMNY UNFAIRLY HAVING BLACKENED THE REPUTATION OF
THE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE PROCESS DAMAGING OUR RELATION-
SHIP. HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THIS SITUATION WOULD CHANGE
SO WE COULD RETURN TO THE HARMONIOUS RELA-

TIONS OF THE PAST.

3. I EXTENDED THE GREETINGS OF MY GOVERNMENT AND OF THE SECRETARY AND OTHER PRINCIPALS WITH WHOM I HAD SPOKEN BEFORE I LEFT WASHINGTON AND INDICATED A DESIRE ON OUR PART TO SEE AN IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP. I ADDED THAT, WHILE WE WERE AWARE OF THE TRAUMA OF THE TUPAMARO PERIOD AND THE STRAINS IT IMPOSED ON URUGUAYAN SOCIETY, WE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE USE OF EXTRA-LEGAL METHODS TO DEAL WITH INSURGENCY OR TERRORISM. I ALSO INDICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH NOT TO BE SWAYED BY SMEAR CAMPAIGNS, THAT IF THERE WERE NOT A GOOD DEAL OF TRUTH TO THE CHARGES MADE AGAINST THE GOU THERE WOULD BE NO STRAIN IN OUR RELATIONS AT THIS TIME. HE NODDED AGREEMENT BUT DID NOT COMMENT.

4. THE PRESIDENT ALLUDED TO THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF LAST EVENING THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD IN NOVEMBER 1981 AS AN INDICATION OF THE EARNEST OF THE GOU TO RETURN TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. I READ OUR RESPONSE AS OUTLINED IN PARA. 3 OF REFTL. (FORTUNATELY I HAD RECEIVED CLEARANCE FROM WASHINGTON JUST PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE FOR THE PRESIDENCY.) BOTH MENDEZ AND ROVIRA LISTENED ATTENTIVELY. MENDEZ OBSERVED ONLY THAT "IF IT WERE UP TO ME I WOULD CALL FOR ELECTIONS TOMORROW BUT THE MILITARY IS COMMITTED TO THE IDEA THAT

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CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE RIGHT BEFORE ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD IN A TRULY DEMOCRATIC MANNER." I EMPHASIZED THE DEPTH OF THE COMMITMENT OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND INDICATED THAT OUR PRINCIPAL DIFFICULTY WITH URUGUAY WAS IN THAT AREA. HE THEN REITERATED THAT URUGUAYANS WERE NOT TORTURERS NOR VIOLATORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS BUT RATHER A SOCIETY THAT WAS DEMOCRATIC IN CHARACTER AND SPIRIT. I REMARKED THAT UNFORTUNATELY URUGUAY'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS SEVERELY DAMAGED ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND THAT IF THE GOU DID NOT TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS WOULD BE VIEWED WITH SUSPICION AND NOT LEAD BY ITSELF TO AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. HE SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND AND NOTED THAT THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF CYNICISM REGARDING URUGUAY. I AGREED THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE MAJOR OBSTACLES THE GOU HAD TO OVERCOME. IT HAD TO PROVE ITSELF TO A HIGHLY DUBIOUS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

THE MEETING WITH THE PRESS NEVER OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SURFACE OUR POSTURE STATEMENT ON THE 1981 ELECTIONS. IT WILL HAVE GREATER IMPACT COMING OUT OF WASHINGTON, AND

WE WILL FOLLOW UP ON THIS END. I ASSUME MENDEZ WILL RELAY
OUR POSITION TO THE CINCS. IN ANY EVENT, I WILL DISCUSS
IT WITH THEM WHEN I MAKE MY AUGUST 12 CALL ON THEM.
PEZZULLO

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